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E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/09/2017

TAGS: PREL PGOV EG LE
SUBJECT: EGYPTIAN MFA ON EGYPTIAN-SYRIAN RELATIONS, THE
LEBANESE-SYRIAN BORDER, AND THE TRIBUNAL

REF: A. STATE 139303

1B. BEIRUT 1504
1C. BEIRUT 1565

Classified By: Deputy Chief of Mission Stuart Jones
Reasons: 1.4 (b) and (d)

11. (C) MFA Cabinet Advisor on the Levant Nazih el Naggary told poloff October 9 that recent GOE overtures to get Syria a seat at the fall peace meeting are partly an effort to empower moderates in the Bashir regime. He said that Syrian advisors are divided on whether Syria should attend. The moderate camp argues for attendance in order to ensure its claim on the Golan. Hardliners argue that Syria should not attend, assert itself in Lebanon, and cause problems for the US in Iraq. Nazih said it is critical to help the Syrian moderates win this internal debate. To that end, Egypt has passed a paper to the SARG urging attendance at the fall meeting.

12. (C) At the same time, the Egyptians want to be in a position to assure the Syrians that they will have the opportunity at the meeting to raise the Golan issue, even if the focus of the meeting is the creation of a Palestinian state. He argued that it was important for the Syrians to have a "full seat" at the table, as opposed to attendance as part of the Arab League Peace Initiative Committee (the mandate of which only covers the Palestinian aspect of Israeli-Arab issues, according to Nazih). Ultimately, he said the ideal strategy would be to leverage the Golan for Syrian cessation of interference in Lebanon. He admitted, however, that he was not sure the Syrians would find this an attractive bargain.

13. (C) Nazih had a pessimistic view of the international efforts to monitor the Syrian-Lebanon border (reftels b and c). He said the Syrians cannot be trusted to use equipment to prevent smuggling into Lebanon, nor would the SARG allow international observers to do their job on the Syrian side of the border. The best way to address the weapons smuggling is by providing equipment and supplies to the Lebanese security forces, he said.

14. (C) Nazih said that the GOE is averse to sending names of Egyptian candidates to the United Nations to be considered as judges for the UN Special Tribunal on Lebanon (reftel a). Although Egypt fully supports the tribunal and MFA officials believe it could deter future assassinations, they fear that overtly supporting the tribunal in this way would undermine their efforts to bring Syria along.

RICCIARDONE